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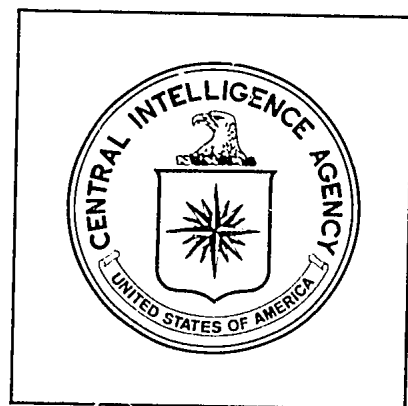
Middle, East, Africa, South Asia 7 Jan 75

S/NFD 1 of 1

No. 0408/75

Secret

No Foreign Dissem



STAFF NOTES:

Middle East
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MIDDLE EAST - AFRICA - SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Egypt

Communists Arrested

Since the violent labor demonstration in Cairo last week, Egyptian security authorities have arrested at least 200 and possibly as many as 400 members of the outlawed but recently resurgent Communist Party, as well as radical leftist youth.

Leftist agitators have for some time been attempting to stir up trouble among labor and student groups. Government authorities believe that these activists had begun to operate with relative impunity in the expectation that the government would not interfere while the visit of Soviet party chief Brezhnev was still pending. According to one Egyptian official, the government had not in fact intended to move against leftist elements until after Brezhnev's departure, but the postponement of that visit and last week's demonstration led Cairo to crackdown.

Although there is no concrete evidence of Soviet involvement with Egyptian communist or leftist elements, it seems likely that the Soviets, in the hope of increasing pressure on President Sadat, have discreetly encouraged the communists to exploit legitimate popular grievances. Despite the openly pro-Soviet line espoused by some of the agitators, the Egyptian government has made no charges, either publicly or privately, of Soviet involvement. In any case, the Soviets, who have openly expressed chagrin over what they regard as Sadat's rightward drift on economic matters, will obviously not be pleased with the government move against Egyptian communists.

At the same time that the government is moving against agitators, it is attempting to respond to popular grievances. The cabinet has announced a decision, actually reached before the demonstration, to allocate additional funds for the immediate import of consumer goods. The government has also promised to review the draft of an unpopular labor reform bill.

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These measures will not long satisfy basic consumer demands. Popular discontent is thus likely to continue for some time and could stimulate further disturbances over both political and economic issues, despite the moves to thwart known agitators. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM)

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Morocco-Libya

Exchange of Ambassadors Announced

Moroccan Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Laraki announced on January 6 an exchange of ambassadors with Libya. The restoration of normal relations ends three and a half years of open hostility that began when President Qadhafi gave premature public support to an abortive coup attempt against King Hassan in 1971.

Previous reporting indicates the two countries have discussed improving bilateral relations since the Arab summit in Rabat last October. Although the Moroccans have no illusions about Qadhafi's anti-monarchist views, they probably hope his interest in exchanging ambassadors reflects a willingness to curtail attempts to foment trouble inside Morocco.

A full Libyan-Moroccan rapprochement will be difficult. The two leaders intensely dislike and distrust one another, and King Hassan will draw back quickly at any sign of Libyan duplicity. A Moroccan official has indicated his government will keep a close watch on Libyan diplomats in Morocco.

The exchange of ambassadors with Morocco will aid Libya in its efforts to convince other Arabs--especially the Egyptians--that Tripoli is seriously interested in improving relations with its neighbors. Qadhafi has apparently come to realize that he can break out of his present isolation only if he shows more willingness to mend fences with conservative and moderate Arab states. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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Afghanistan-Pakistan*Roadblock on the Way to the Summit*

Prospects for an early summit meeting between Pakistani Prime Minister Bhutto and Afghan President Daoud have dimmed as a result of Afghan reaction to Bhutto's public announcement on January 2 that he had invited Daoud to Islamabad to discuss issues between the two countries. Afghan foreign ministry officials allege that Bhutto's statement came at a time when preliminary negotiations over a possible Daoud visit to Pakistan were still underway and prior to issuance of any formal invitation. Bhutto complained, in his statement, that he had received no response to his invitation.

The Afghans have further alleged, in demarches to US and other representatives in Kabul, that Bhutto, by his action, was intentionally attempting to undermine the negotiations for the proposed meeting. They note that Bhutto's statement to the press on January 2 included sharp criticism of Kabul for allegedly interfering in Pakistan's internal affairs, including the training and sending of guerrillas to the two Pakistani provinces bordering on Afghanistan. The Afghans strongly deny these charges.

The Afghan position does not specifically reject the proposal for a summit meeting, but it emphasizes that prior preparations are necessary if the visit is to be a success. Daoud, who has frequently expressed distrust of Bhutto, will have to make the final decision on whether or not to proceed with plans for a visit to Pakistan. Presumably, he will have to weigh possible advantages from a reduction of tension in the area with the risks involved if the summit were to fail. Bhutto's handling of the issue thus far is likely to make the Afghan leader more hesitant toward accepting an invitation--if one is ever officially proffered.
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India*Aftermath of Mishra's Death*

The unsolved killing of Railways Minister L. N. Mishra last week by a terrorist bomb explosion during the inauguration of a rail line in Bihar state has led to an exchange of accusations between the government and opposition parties. So far, Prime Minister Gandhi has refrained from making specific charges in public, but accuses the opposition of having created an atmosphere conducive to violence. She maintains, moreover, that Mishra's death was part of a "well planned" effort and a "rehearsal" for a future attempt on her own life.

Spokesmen for some of the major opposition parties, which have lined up in the past year behind Mrs. Gandhi's most prestigious critic, J. P. Narayan, have suggested the government is somehow implicated in Mishra's murder. Mishra was the prime suspect in an import license scandal that deeply embarrassed Mrs. Gandhi's administration during the parliament's winter session, which just ended. Narayan, for his part, has called for a full inquiry into the bombing incident. Speculation about possible foul play on the part of the government is likely to grow following allegations by one of the doctors who treated Mishra, that delayed medical treatment contributed to the minister's death. Preliminary reports indicated Mishra had been only slightly injured.

Several suspects, including some disgruntled rail workers, reportedly have been arrested, but there is little hint as to how the investigation will be handled. Politically-inspired assassination attempts against high-ranking officials have been rare in India, and Mrs. Gandhi's safety in public has not up to now constituted a major problem for security forces. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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